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DISASTER-RELATED MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING STILL AVAILABLE IN SEVERAL OKLAHOMA COUNTIES

Severe June floods took away houses and lives in many regions of Oklahoma, and some people may still be experiencing anxiety, depression or other mental health issues related to these events.

A Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant awarded to the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS) will provide free counseling to those in declared disaster counties who are still needing mental health services in the aftermath, said Tom Thomson, ODMHSAS access specialist and disaster coordinator.

More than 25 counties are included in the disaster declaration. Counties eligible for counseling services are Alfalfa, Canadian, Cherokee, Craig, Creek, Delaware, Garfield, Kay, Kingfisher, LeFlore, Logan, Mayes, Muskogee, Noble, Nowata, Okmulgee, Osage, Ottawa, Pawnee, Payne, Pottawatomie, Rogers, Sequoyah, Tulsa, Wagoner, Washington and Woods.

As part of the grant, trained crisis counselors will conduct outreach and public education regarding trauma and the emotional impact of natural disasters. Counselors will go door-to-door for outreach, and can be identified wearing lime green T-shirts or safety vests with **"All-OK 4438"** printed on them, or with an **"All-OK 4438"** badge. Thomson said.

Several ODMHSAS Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) will be involved in the effort, including Grand Lake CMHC, CREEKS Behavioral Health Services and Green Country Behavioral Health Services in northeast and eastern Oklahoma; Counseling and Recovery Services of Oklahoma in Tulsa; Red Rock CMHC in central Oklahoma; and Carl Albert CMHC in southeastern Oklahoma.

"The emotional impact of a severe weather disaster often may not hit until months after the event," Thomson said. "We can provide brief counseling sessions, as well as assessment and referral for those needing longer-term counseling."

The program will run through June 30, 2020.

For services, call any CMHC, 211 or the Reachout hotline at 1-800-522-9054.



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